

EDITORIALS

BUNNELL MEMORIAL

It is fitting that the medical profession of California at the coming meeting in Yosemite Valley should honor the memory of the doctor who, in 1851 as a member of the Mariposa Battalion, the first white men to enter the valley, had imagination enough to appreciate the scenic wonders of the gorge. While his companions would have named it Happy Valley or something equally inane, Doctor Bunnell suggested that they name the valley for the tribe of Indians which lived there and which the battalion was pursuing.

The name "Yosemite" is otherwise appropriate, for it signifies the bear, to this day one of the denizens of the valley, typifying also the State of California.

The committee appointed at the Los Angeles meeting has had a plaque cast in bronze, commemorating Doctor Bunnell and his naming of the valley which, with permission of Mr. Stephen T. Mather, Director of National Parks, it is proposed to mount on a suitable rock at the foot of El Capitan, across the river from where the Mariposa Battalion made its principal camp in the valley, and dedicate it with appropriate ceremonies on Tuesday morning, May 19.

IS THE MEDICAL BAND GETTING TOO FAR AHEAD OF THE HEALTH PARADE?

Whenever the leading band gets too far ahead of the parade, the marchers not only get out of step and become confused, but groups of them are led off to side streets by the tunes of lesser attractions.

That a condition analogous to this is before us in the parade of medical and health progress, is attested by many facts which will readily occur to any reader. Surely, there is a band on every corner, each playing a different tune in a different key. Part of the leading band goes marching on, while other parts have turned back to see what has become of the parade. The paraders are confused and divided, as well they might be. Some are following this or that side show, while others drop into way-side inns for rest and sustenance. Corned beef and cabbage appeal more strongly to many than the blare of the canned music they are urged to follow. While aides of so many colors that they camouflage the whole situation rush up and down the lines exhorting, pleading, and commanding in a hundred tongues, nature, propelled by her inimitable and inexorable laws, rolls upon the paraders, taking toll from many who should be exempt if they only knew where to go and how to get there.

Every limb and branch of the tree of life has its group yelling at the tops of their voices that their branch is the main trunk of the tree, while others soar noisily through the air about until their gas is exhausted when they fall crushed, often taking with them some of the overloaded limbs of the health

tree. Is it any wonder that constantly increasing thousands of people are led to mistake the noise, the show, the shadows, for the substance of health? Having been uprooted from their generations of faith in a health leadership that marched close to and hand in hand with them by the razzle and dazzle of a thousand gaily colored lights flickered by false prophets, too many are growing weary of changing step and following where neither they nor their alleged leaders know.

One large group, for example, that has millions of followers, sets up scales, measuring-rods, and other mechanical devices as health diagnostic images for the ails of children. It does not require any particular intelligence to employ the images nor to interpret their readings. According to them, you either have, or have not "malnutrition," "undernutrition," or "overnutrition"—whatever these terms may mean. And having arrived at a diagnosis, you either take milk and vitamins or you don't. Like all "sure cures," based upon "sure fire," quick-acting, infallible diagnostic and treatment features, they do no measurable harm so long as there is nothing the matter. Just recently, there have been reported instances of chronic appendicitis, ulcers of stomach and intestine, tuberculosis, osteomyelitis, rickets, malaria, diabetes, and syphilis that had been diagnosed by totally incompetent persons as "malnutrition" by the use of mechanical diagnostic devices *and treated by milk and vitamins*. The outcome in more than one of these instances was needlessly tragic. One of these days public opinion is likely to be focused on a serious tragedy, and some "near doctors" are likely to be defendants in a manslaughter suit.

Another large group is pounding away upon the slogan of periodic health examinations. Health examinations of themselves have only a statistical value. It's the carefully written record of competent examinations and diagnosis placed in the hands of the person and his physician and followed up by them that is of value. This is precisely what is not being done extensively, nor is there any indication that it is what is wanted by those who make the most noise.

And so we might go on through many, many of the "loud-speaking" practices. Scales and weights furnish incomplete evidence of limited value; medical examinations furnish evidence of great value, *provided* only that in both cases the evidence is written, completed, and checked where necessary, *and* placed in the hands of the patient *and* his physician *and* followed up.

Let us, by all means, encourage the weighing and measuring of school children and all others. Let us have more and more health examinations, but we should stop the idea that is now being absorbed by millions of people that the one furnishes sufficient diagnostic data, or that either are end-results that mean health progress. The average citizen may be more of a moron than some of those who pronounce him so, but he is intelligent enough to understand a broader, more constructive, and more useful health message than he is now getting.